

Message #4

Esther 2:1-11

Esther appears to be a wild story running totally out of control. It is the story of a party-type atmosphere in which godless heathens are doing and saying whatever they want. Behind the scenes of all of this, however, is the sovereign and providential direction and plan of God. God was moving all these events in exactly the way He wanted in order to move people where He wanted in order to protect and preserve His people.

NO MATTER HOW WILD OR BIZARRE DECISIONS OF LEADERSHIP SEEM TO BE, GOD IS STILL WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES CONTROLLING ALL THINGS AND CARING FOR HIS PEOPLE AND MOVING PEOPLE WHERE HE WANTS THEM TO BE.

Josephus said he was fond of Vashti and now missed her, but knew he could not change his decree (Josephus, p. 238). He had sobered up and his anger had been abated and now he was left with the loneliness of an irrational and, in many ways, an immoral decision.

People who have trouble with their temper often are emotionally up and down like a roller coaster. They are controlled by their emotions which are unstable. God does not want us controlled by our emotions; He wants us controlled by our minds.

The amazing reality of all of this is God was sovereignly directing this whole episode. He was actually working out His plan through the empty vacuum that existed in the heart of King Ahasuerus.

God was out to protect and preserve Israel and He oversaw every one of these events. From a human perspective, it appears as though things are wild and out of control. From a divine perspective, God was in all of these events, turning the king's heart wherever He wished (Prov. 21:1).

PART #1 – Key people in leadership suggest a possible human solution to the king's loneliness. **2:2-4**

Notice carefully from **verse 4** that their plan was based on what would “please the king.” This phrase that occurs twice literally means to please the king's eye. Pleasing the king, not God, was their number one objective (1:19).

Their proposal was simple—all the beautiful young virgins were to be sought from all 127 provinces, brought to Susa, and put into the king's harem. Hegai, a eunuch, was to be in charge of caring for all of these women, supplying them with their cosmetic needs. One by one each woman was to be brought to the king for a night and the one who pleased the king the most was to be named queen.

Notice from **verse 3** that overseers were appointed in all the provinces that were responsible for searching out every beautiful young virgin in his province and sending them to Susa.

This was a highly organized, immoral beauty pageant that was designed to surround the king with the most beautiful women in the world so he could have a series of one night stands and name one of them his new queen. If you were a father with a virgin daughter that was beautiful, you had no say in the matter. If the overseer picked your daughter, she was destined to go to Susa for the hedonistic purpose of pleasing and pleasuring the king.

We would never expect to find God sovereignly working out His plan and program in such a promiscuous and sensual environment. We would never expect God to be sovereignly overseeing these godless decisions. But God was overseeing this and was sovereignly working behind the scenes in order to work out His plan in preserving and caring for His chosen people, Israel.

PART #2 – Certain Jews in Susa present a possible solution to the king's loneliness. **2:5-7**

Mordecai was a Jew with a royal lineage who lived in Susa. He was a Benjamite whose family had been exiled under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The relative pronoun "who" (**2:6**) informs us that Kish was the one originally taken captive in 597 B.C. and Mordecai was of his lineage. Mordecai is not the antecedent of the pronoun "who," Kish, his great-grandfather is.

Dr. John Whitcomb gives us a good perspective of dates and ages:

"Assuming, then, that Kish was a young man when he was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C., his son Shimei could have been born about 580 B.C. Shimei's older son Jair could have been born about 550 B.C. and his younger son Abihail about 545 B.C. Mordecai could have been begotten of Jair about 520 B.C. and Abihail's daughter Esther about 505 B.C., making Mordecai about fifteen years older than his cousin and making Esther about twenty-six when she became queen, in 470 or 478 B.C." (John Whitcomb, *Esther, Triumph of God's Sovereignty*, pp. 48-49).

Mordecai was raising his cousin, Hadassah (her Jewish name), that is Esther (her Persian name). Esther was a beautiful Jewish woman in both form and face. In other words, she had a gorgeous face and figure and when Esther's mother and father died, Mordecai took Esther and raised her as his own daughter.

The question that immediately comes to mind is what in the world is Mordecai, a royal descendant of Saul, doing living in Susa, when he could have gone back to Jerusalem?

Apparently Mordecai's family did not choose to obey God. They decided they liked the Gentile environment better.

What we clearly have here is a situation in which God's people have not fully obeyed God. They have chosen to live in a godless environment rather than to commit themselves to obeying God's Word.

When we are not doing the will of God and obeying the Word of God, God will seem to be very far away from us. He will appear to be far removed from our lives.

PART #3 – Esther becomes a possible solution to the king’s loneliness. **2:8-11**

Fact #1 - She “was taken” to the king’s palace. **2:8c**

Mordecai did not volunteer Esther, nor did Esther volunteer herself; she was “taken.” She was one of the “many” who were taken into custody to go into the one night stand competition to become queen of Persia. Josephus says 400 virgins were brought to the palace (Josephus, p. 238).

Although God does oversee this whole thing, the decision for Mordecai to stay in Susa was costly. When we don’t follow the Word of God, we will find ourselves in many, many compromising situations that probably could have been avoided. Things won’t seem pretty or positive when we are not obeying the will of God.

Fact #2 - She was pleasing to the king’s ruler. **2:9**

One cannot help but be reminded of how Joseph, when he was in Egypt, was raised to the favor of both Potiphar and the jailer. One cannot help but think of Daniel, who was greatly favored by Nebuchadnezzar that he was promoted ruler over all of Babylon (Dan. 2:46-49). In both instances, Joseph and Daniel were specifically doing the will of God and obeying the Word of God. However, in this instance, Mordecai and Esther are not doing the will of God. The thought of a Jew marrying a Persian clearly was a violation of the Law of God. The thought of immorality was clearly a violation of the Law of God.

Esther was elevated above all the other women because God was ordaining it.

Fact #3 - She was not testifying that she was Jewish. **2:10a**

Esther was keeping her nationality a secret. She certainly could have been testifying that the reason for her promotion was because she was connected to the God of Israel and was a Jew. Instead, she kept her mouth shut concerning her Jewish nationality.

When we get away from obeying the Word of God, our witnessing stops.

Fact #4 - She was obedient to Mordecai. **2:10b**

Esther was a very submissive, respectful and obedient woman. She was always willing to listen and to obey Mordecai, who had raised her as his own daughter.

We don’t know specifically why Mordecai advised her to keep silent concerning her Jewish nationality. Perhaps he felt she might not be selected as queen. Perhaps he felt she would be in danger if people knew she was a Jew.

Perhaps he felt all of Israel would be in danger if any knew they were Jews. Regardless of the reason, Esther obeyed Mordecai, which becomes an important matter for later it will be this very feature that enables her to save the Jews.

Submission to authority is very right and very biblical.

Fact #5 - She was cared for by Mordecai. **2:11**

There can be no doubt that as Mordecai paced back and forth in front of the court of the harem that he must have thought, if only I had gone back to Jerusalem, my little girl wouldn't be in this mess.

When we, who are fathers, don't obey God's Word, our entire family suffers. As Dr. J. Vernon McGee said, when we are in the will of God, we will be resting; but in Mordecai's state, he was pacing (J. Vernon McGee, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, p. 194).

There are many lessons to be learned from this section:

- 1) Irrational and emotional decisions do not leave one happy, but empty.
- 2) Immoral and godless leadership and their decisions are still under the sovereignty of God.
- 3) When God's people have the opportunity to obey God, they should do it fully and immediately.
- 4) When we stay in a godless environment long enough, we will be taken captive by it.
- 5) When we are not witnessing, we are not fully obeying God and we probably aren't close to God.
- 6) No matter what happens, whether positive, negative or bizarre, God is still sovereign.